ABSTRACT

A 3-node online meeting planning system includes a secure computer as a first node which is protected from unauthorized access running a meeting planner application program for entering meeting planning data which includes sensitive data of persons authorized as attendees at a meeting event and non-sensitive group data, a public online site as a second node which receives only the non-sensitive group data uploaded from the first node and assembles a unique meeting group program for the group using the non-sensitive group data, and a private online site as a third node which receives the assembled meeting group program from the second node and the sensitive data downloaded from the first node and combines them in an online private meeting group site accessible only to authorized attendees of the meeting event. Using this 3-node system, the meeting planner at the secure computer can retain control of the sensitive data, while using the non-sensitive group data for resource browsing and meeting planning functions on the public online site, which may be an ASP meeting planner portal which has an interface and navigation schema familiar to meeting planners and provides high-powered search tools and links to other public sites. The private meeting group site can be made the hub for a wide range of transactions, fulfillment functions, and group communications functions for the meeting event.

Table I: Meeting Planner Software Features

1. Data Entry to Meeting Group Database
   A. Allows entry into and maintains records of employees, vendor contacts, service providers, associations, etc., and uses them as a pool to populate a meeting group record.
   B. "Last Contact" feature: allows instantaneous switching between records.
2. Resource Browser for Selecting and Booking Activities & Events for Meeting Group
   A. Accesses vendor-supplied resource information from within the software, or by one-click access to the Internet.
   B. Maintains multiple cost and sell types for cost/price comparison (vendor guarantee, actual cost, client guarantee, bulk); maintains multiple sell types for planned event comparisons (component sell, activity sell, bulk sell).
   C. Maintains pool of resources that may be required for a meeting group (Transportation, Activities, Events, Food & Beverage, Golf, Labor, Accommodations, etc.); allows selections for any of the multiple sell pricing types; resources can be added to the group resource browser singly, selectively or en masse.
   D. Allows cloning of a resource, both in the main and group resource browsers.
   F. Maintains group resources for the group resource browser independently of the main resources; group resources can be modified for a particular group.
   G. Include transportation services; passenger counts updated automatically per user selection (All Pax, Transferred Pax, None); automatically generates porterage costs, gratuity costs and meet-and-greet costs for transportation movements.
   H. Allows groupings of meeting participants together by arrival data and departure data, and assigns appropriate transportation based on those groupings.
4. Service Requests/Orders
   A. Generates detailed service requests for any vendor based on entered data.
   B. Tracks status of service requests, annotations, change orders, replies.
   C. Generates purchase confirmations and vouchers via e-mail in real-time.
5. Export of Meeting Group Data
   A. Group database can be exported to online meeting group site for use during meeting.
   B. Extractor tools can be added to extract non-sensitive group data for export to a public ASP site for further Internet resource browsing and creating fully-featured meeting group program to be used at online meeting group site; tools can be configured to extract group demographic data, group preference data, non-identifying member Ids (e.g., truncated email handles), etc.
   C. Exported data can be formatted with XML markup types.
   D. Group database can include records of any desired contacts, vendors, associations, etc. for convenient access at online meeting group site.
   E. Exported database be returned from the field with modified data for inclusion in the company's master or archive database.
   F. Tools can be provided to integrate meeting group data with externally-developed meeting group program installed at online meeting group site.

6.   Meeting Group Communications
   A.   Generates personal itinerary for each group member, including arrival, departure and booked activity information; itinerary sent to each member via e-mail in real-time.
   B.   Includes communication functions and members directory to allow communications at the online meeting group site, such as e-mails, letters and messages, to be distributed to all members of a group.
   C.   Automatically generates departure notices for group members based on hotel and room numbers.